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RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY  
RUEHNK/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 000232

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: DEMARCHE RESPONSE: EU WEIGHING MAURITANIA  
SANCTIONS PATH

REF: STATE 13962

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Chris Davis for reasons 1.4  
(b,d).

11. (C) Poloff discussed reftel points with Guido Carrara, European Commission Mauritania desk officer, and Ambassador Petr Kopriva, Africa director at the Czech PermRep to the European Union, both of whom were cautiously optimistic the EU will consider targeted sanctions against key junta leaders and their colleagues in the coming months. February 20 marks both the end of the 120-day consultative period under Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement and the Paris meeting of the consultative group on Mauritania composed of the EU, AU, UN, Arab League, Francophonie, and Islamic Conference. Kopriva described the Paris meeting as important and said he expected each participating organization to give its assessment of the current political situation in Mauritania and its expectations for future actions against the military junta. The end of the 120-day consultative period will likely result in the European Commission formally ending development assistance, which has been suspended since September, and a "strong" EU statement describing the lack of progress during the consultative period, Carrara said.

12. (C) Meanwhile, the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) sanctions process will proceed along a separate track. Decision on further EU action against Mauritania would then move to the European Council. Carrara said the Commission is still finalizing its proposal to the Council, but he expects that it will include a recommendation that the member states consider targeted sanctions to include asset freezes and visa bans against key officials. The Council's Africa Working Group and ACP Working Group already have begun discussing such options informally, Kopriva said. Most EU member states favor sanctions, but Germany, Spain and Portugal remain somewhat skeptical. Kopriva and Carrara noted, however, that the EU has remained united thus far in opposing the Mauritanian coup, a position they believed would be strengthened by the recent AU decision to implement sanctions. Econoff confirmed with a Council Secretariat sanctions staffer that discussions on targeted sanctions are still at a preliminary phase at the regional working group level.

13. (C) COMMENT: EU Heads of Mission in Nouakchott would likely play a central role in identifying and proposing names for targeted sanctions designation. The USG could influence this process at an early stage by sharing thoughts (formally or informally) on the ground with EU missions. Procedurally, after the EU regional working groups achieve consensus on proposed sanctions targets in coordinating positions negotiated between EU capitals, Nouakchott and Brussels, the Council Secretariat would draft a proposed Common Position for successive approval by the External Relations Counselor Working Group, Permanent Representatives to the EU, and finally Ministers. For effective complementarity with any new U.S. sanctions measures, we should continue to engage the EU informally at the early stage of its process. Informally updating EU Member States and institutions on the status of U.S. decision-making could also strengthen the EU's public outreach, which it will sometimes employ well in advance to indicate it is considering additional formal measures. END COMMENT.

MURRAY

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